

## MERRILL'S MARAUDERS BRIDGE TRAILS COMMITTEE

<b>Title:</b>	Merrill's Marauders Bridge Trails Committee
<b>Status:</b>	<u>Advisory</u> – Ad-Hoc and created by the Town Council to work with and under the direction of the Town Manager.
<b>Mission / Charge:</b>	<p>To provide the Town Manager with input, advice, and other volunteer services needed to compose and implement an action plan for a trail system along and possibly over the Souhegan River in conjunction with the Merrill's Marauders Bridge in Merrimack. Further, to advise the Town Manager as needed in the securing of all necessary agreements, easements, etc. with the State of New Hampshire, Federal Government, Merrimack School District, and any private entities, or landowners.</p> <p>Final approval of the plan rests with the Town Council before implementation.</p>
<b>Membership:</b>	<p>Five (5) members.</p> <p>With four (4) appointed by the Town Council and one (1) by the Merrimack School Board.</p> <p>Membership will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (3) General members of the Public (appointed by the Town Council).</li> <li>• (1) School Board Representative or member of the Public to act as the School Board liaison. (appointed by the Merrimack School Board)</li> <li>• (1) Town Council Representative or member of the Public to act as Council liaison (appointed by the Town Council).</li> </ul> <p>The General members are to serve a 3 year term (July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>) with the Council and School Board representatives to be appointed annually by the respective board following their respective rules.</p>
<b>Organization of Committee:</b>	<p><u>Committee "Officers"</u> are to include a Chair only who is elected annually by the members of the Committee.</p> <p>The Chair is responsible for facilitating the meetings and ensuring all activities of the Committee adhere to RSA 91-A; including posting of meetings and taking of minutes. The Chair is also the liaison between the Committee and the Town Manager and shall interact with the Town Manager on a regular basis.</p>

	<p>The Chair may be asked to represent the Committee and appear before the Town Council or School Board as those bodies may deem necessary. The Chair is allowed to make motions and vote as any member would.</p> <p>In the absence of the Chair, the Town Manager may appoint a member of the Committee to act as the Chair until the Chair is able to resume their responsibilities or the Committee elects a new Chair.</p> <p>If a vacancy occurs with the Chair, the Town Manager will convene a meeting of the Committee to explicitly elect a new Chair to serve out the remaining term.</p> <p>The Town Council will fill all vacancies of Council appointed members and the School Board will fill any vacancy of its representative.</p> <p>The Town Manager is not expected to participate in all meetings of the Committee but is expected to meet with the Committee Chair regularly along with the full Committee at least twice per year.</p> <p>Under no circumstances will a Town Councilor or School Board Member serve as the Chair; but if their respective representative is not a member of the Council or Board, that representative may serve as the Chair.</p> <p><u>Working Sub-Committees</u> may be established and dissolved - on topics deemed relevant to the fulfillment of the Committee's Charge. The Committee can create, fill, and charge these Sub-Committees as needed.</p> <p><b>Working with other interested parties and those who can advise or consult with the Committee is strongly encouraged.</b> These other parties are not required to be members of any Sub-Committees.</p>
<b>Representative Activities:</b>	As proposed and accepted by the Town Council when establishing the Committee.
<b>Meeting Frequency:</b>	At the call of the Chair, but quarterly as a minimum.
<b>Budget:</b>	As approved by the Town Manager.
<b>Staff Support:</b>	As approved by the Town Manager.

# **Merrill's Marauders Bridge Trails Committee**

August 27, 2008

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**Abstract:** This document outlines a proposal to form a Committee to assist the Town Manager in developing a Trail system within the Town Center area along the Souhegan River adjacent to and under the Merrill's Marauders Bridge. This Committee would act under the direction of the Town Manager using volunteers from the Community appointed by the Town Council and School Board.

## **Overview...**

In 1954, the F.E. Everett Turnpike was constructed south to north through the eastern edge of the town of Merrimack. With the exception of a few feeder roads, the effect of this transportation improvement, in part, was to separate the center of community activity, and business, from the remaining residential and open space west of the turnpike. As development occurred and road improvements were undertaken over subsequent years, the F. E. Everett Turnpike became an increased barrier to pedestrian and alternative transportation access to the growing center of Merrimack and its municipal and educational infrastructure. In the last few years, Merrimack has undertaken a "Town Center Plan" to continue development of that area and has anchored this plan with the location of a new eight acre park on the Souhegan River and a district Courthouse and Family Court facility on Town Hall property. The adjacent school property has grown from a small high school, to three modern educational facilities, elementary through high school, housing over two thousand six hundred fifty students. In addition, the Merrimack Public Library has proposed a new facility that would lie within this zone. The Town of Merrimack, the Merrimack Planning Board and the Merrimack School District, have continued to require easements and acquire property, consistent with their differing charges, to create a contiguous green zone along the Souhegan River and share resources to advance the Town Center Plan. Capital improvements to recreation, the addition of conservation areas and the Heritage Trail have met some of the goals for both east and west of the turnpike but continue to lack the good effect that would result from being linked by pedestrian access.

## **Vision statement...**

The Merrill's Marauders Trails plan is a trail project that will link the existing town center resources, trails and school district facilities, with the 80 Acres Conservation area on the north side of the Souhegan River and continue to cross to the south side of the Souhegan River, by pedestrian bridge, near the Merrill's Marauders Bridge. The project will illustrate a vision for recreational and educational trails along the Souhegan River and will be dedicated to "Merrill's Marauders" to gain a greater awareness and appreciation for their experiences in World War II.

## ***Opportunities...***

The immediate benefit of access to the center of Town by a large residential quadrant of Merrimack that is now disconnected cannot be overstated.

With the increased price of energy, it seems wise to provide alternatives to costly and time consuming trips by vehicle to the business section, town and school facilities.

Planning thus far has provided easements for trails and other master plan amenities that would be complete and greater than the sum of their parts by finally achieving this linkage.

The ability of the School District to utilize such an area of historic, geologic and ecological importance is significant. It expands opportunity for field study and practical application of academic programs while reducing the cost associated with travel to offsite locations for similar purposes.

## ***Trails Project Phases***

The project is envisioned to be done in five phases. They are:

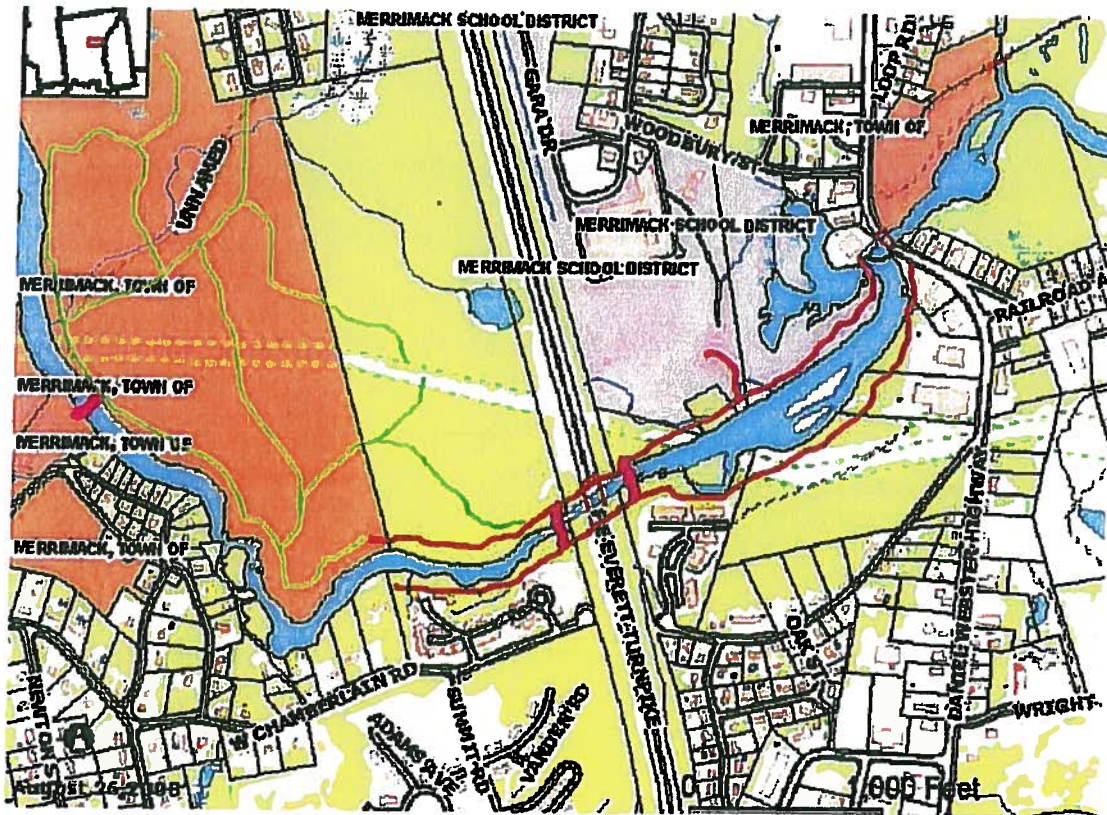
1. Planning and Agreements phase (Fall 2008 through Fall 2009).
2. Plan approval phase and Grant applications (Winter 2009/2010).
3. Plan implementation phase outside the State Right-of-Way (Construction Season 2010).
4. Plan implementation within the State Right-of-Way (Construction Season 2011).
5. Maintenance phase.

## ***Why create this Committee now?***

1. The State is about ready to award a contract to reconstruct the Merrill's Marauders Bridge along the F.E. Everett Turnpike over the Souhegan River. This contract execution period will run from late 2008 through mid 2011. As part of the construction, the NH DOT has committed to provide pedestrian east/west access under the Bridge on both the north and south banks of the Souhegan River.
2. The NH DOT has recognized the Town wanted to secure this access by signing an Encroachment Agreement back in 1995 but the State did not sign the agreement in 1995. NH DOT is looking for the Town to reconfirm its commitment and formalize this commitment with the Town once again as part of the current bridge reconstruction.
3. To ensure the pedestrian access is as the Town would want as tempered by what the State and its Contractor can perform, the Town needs to start its planning now given

construction on the project will start early in 2009. Determining the trail connections locations early in the project's construction will allow the Town to leverage and work with the State's Contractor to have those connection points made to the best advantage of the Town.

## ***Trails Concept***



The above map of the area shows potential new trails along with 3 possible pedestrian bridge locations (shown in purple). If seen in color, red indicates new trail system concept with lime green showing some of the current trails related to the 80 acres Conservation area also known as Wildcat Falls park.

## ***What is involved in the Trails Project?***

The Trails project will involve many items. These can be broken up into the following general categories and descriptions:

- Agreements, easements, purchase and sales.



There needs to be a number of legal agreements achieved to realize this new Trails system. These agreements include an encroachment agreement with the State to encroach within the State's Right-of-Way near Merrill's Marauders Bridge, Easements to go over private and/or commercial property, agreements with the School District to access and park on District property, and possibly to purchase both State and private property that abuts or is contained within the concept area.

- Grants, Bonds, and other Fund raising.

To fund the improvements there are opportunities within the State and possibly Federal government for grants to fund these improvements. Grants for trails systems, alternative transportation means, etc are available. If the Town wanted to support it, a bond is an option. Private donations of money and services have happened on many other projects of this type and there is no reason to not believe it can happen with this project.

- Trails.

This project wants to have east to west trails along both banks of the Souhegan River. It seeks to connect the new trails to present trails within the Town's 80 acres Conservation area and the School District property that already has some informal trails. It also seeks to create new trails within easements the Town has within the Condominium projects on both East and West Chamberlain Roads. Lastly, it hopes to bring those trails out to Daniel Webster Highway on both sides of the Chamberlain Bridge through both Town and Private/Commercial property.

- Pedestrian Bridge.

A pedestrian bridge is envisioned to cross the Souhegan River within the trail system. This would allow for pedestrian access north to south. That new access will open up the north part of Town including the Town Center for pedestrians who are currently blocked by the Souhegan River. The area of Town blocked and people in that area constitute nearly a third of our Town.

- Concerns and collaboration of abutters.

The project involves many abutters. Each will have concerns related to the users, allowed uses, etc. of the trail system. These concerns need to be heard and addressed within the proposed plan.

- Construction Safety during the State's Bridge Construction.

The State has raised significant concerns related to students and others who may wish to cross under the Merrill's Marauders Bridge during the period of reconstruction. That area will be a hazard for anyone not working for the Contractor. The School District shares this concern as well since many of the people who may wish to use

that area may also be connected School activities. Planning for this event, educating the students and public, and enforcing the keep out zones will be an important aspect of this project. This Committee needs to work with all parties to address the Safety concerns and formulate ways to reduce harm to the public and the contractor while protecting property.

- Promotion, education, advertising, memorializing, and opening of the Trails system.

Opening up a new trail system involves many activities. Maps need to be created; parking accommodated, and rules of use need to be drafted and promoted. Education of the Town's Public Safety people needs to be done, etc.

This trail system will open up Merrill's Marauders Bridge to the public. This bridge commemorates and memorializes the tremendous sacrifice these American soldiers gave to our country ( <http://www.marauder.org/bridge01.htm> ). The project needs to develop an educational component that reminds people of who General Merrill was and what his squad did. A memorial would be in order.



## Excerpt from ...Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 4, 2008, at 7:00 PM, in the Town Hall Courtroom

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### **Old Business**

#### **Merrill's Marauders Bridge Trails Project and Committee Submitted by Vice Chair Tim Tenhave**

Through recent events, the Town has an opportunity to realize a Trails system that passes under the Merrill's Marauders Bridge along the Souhegan River. The Agenda item seeks to:

1. Approve the Merrill's Marauders Bridge Trails Project.
2. Approve the formation of a Committee to assist the Town Manager with this project.

Vice Chair Tenhave explained that the State is in the process of redoing the Merrill's Marauders bridge and this will allow trail work to be done in the area. He stated that there would be benefits to the Town and to the School. Trails in this area would create an opportunity for pedestrians to move east to west which currently does not exist. He is proposing a committee of five. Four members would be appointed by the Council, three from the general public, and one Councilor. The fifth member would be appointed by the School Board.

**MOTION** was made by Vice Chair Tenhave and seconded by Councilor Rothhaus to approve the plan for the trail project in concept. **MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

Councilor Malzone explained that he was against the original concept but he feels that this plan is more concise and organized.

**MOTION** was made by Vice Chair Tenhave and Councilor Malzone to form the committee as presented. **MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

Vice Chair Tenhave stated that he put this together with a great deal of input from many people. He appreciates the State's assistance. Councilor Rothhaus asked how the appointment process would move forward. Vice Chair Tenhave explained that the Town would advertise the positions. Councilor Rothhaus does not want to lose the interest of Mr. Mower, Mr. May, and Mr. Powell.